

## **Effects of Roadless Area Conservation Proposed Rule on Mark Twain National Forest (MTNF)**

The proposed rule has three parts. One part deals with prohibitions on activities in the unroaded portions of inventoried roadless areas. (An “unroaded portion” is defined as any portion of an inventoried roadless area in which no classified road has been constructed or reconstructed since the area was inventoried.) A second part deals with procedures for evaluating roadless characteristics of inventoried roadless areas and other unroaded areas. The third part deals with how the proposal would be applied to the Tongass National Forest in Alaska. The effects on Mark Twain National Forest of each part of the proposed rule are discussed below.

### **PROHIBITIONS**

The proposed rule would prohibit construction or reconstruction of permanent and temporary roads in the unroaded portions of inventoried roadless areas. Maintenance of existing roads would be allowed. No other activities would be prohibited.

**CURRENT CONDITION OF INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS ON MTNF:** Mark Twain National Forest has six inventoried roadless areas. These areas were identified through the RARE II process conducted in the mid and late 1970’s.

During development of the Forest Plan, three of these areas -- Anderson Mountain on the Fredericktown unit (2,600 acres); Spring Creek on the Willow Springs unit (4,800 acres); and Swan Creek on the Ava unit (7,000 acres) -- were allocated a management prescription that emphasizes management for semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation. The construction of permanent roads other than those specifically named in the Forest Plan is prohibited under this management prescription, although the construction of temporary roads is allowed. Under current Forest Plan direction, only uneven-aged timber management is allowed in these areas.

There are no Forest Service system roads in the Anderson Mountain area, and it is still considered unroaded. There is one Forest Service system road that crosses the Swan Creek area. This road existed in an unimproved condition prior to the RARE II inventory, and has not been reconstructed. Therefore, the entire Swan Creek area is still considered unroaded. There is a system road that extends into the Spring Creek area approximately 0.75 miles, and this road has been reconstructed since the RARE II inventory. Therefore, a portion of the Spring Creek area is considered roaded, although the majority is still unroaded. There has been no timber sold in these three areas in the past five years, and there are no plans to do so through fiscal year 2004.

The Big Creek inventoried roadless area is located on the Ava unit (9,000 acres), and was allocated to two separate management prescriptions that emphasize management for grasslands and grazing, and wildlife habitat diversity. Both of these management prescriptions allow up to 2 miles of permanent roads per square mile of National Forest land. Timber harvest is allowed under both even-aged and uneven-aged management systems. The Big Creek area currently includes approximately 30 miles of Forest Service system roads, which existed in an unimproved condition prior to the RARE II inventory. Approximately 3.5 miles of those roads have been reconstructed since RARE II. Therefore, a portion of the Big Creek area is considered roaded. Approximately 400,000 board feet of timber has been harvested from the Big Creek area in the past five years; there are no plans to sell any additional timber from this area through fiscal year 2004.

The two remaining inventoried roadless areas are called the Irish Wilderness Excluded Lands. These areas total 1,070 acres, and are located adjacent to the Irish Wilderness on the Doniphan Unit. When Congress designated the Irish Wilderness in 1984, these lands were excluded due to potentially significant mineral values. Congress stipulated, "...that, except as necessary to allow mining and associated support activities, these areas shall be managed...to preserve their wilderness characteristics." With the exception of some exploratory drilling in the early 1980's, these areas have been managed as Wilderness.

**EFFECT OF PROPOSAL ON MTNF:** The only change to current management in the Anderson Mountain, Spring Creek or Swan Creek areas under this part of the proposal would be that temporary roads could no longer be built in those areas. Use and maintenance of the existing Forest Service system roads in those areas could continue, but they could not be reconstructed. All other management activities currently allowed under the Forest Plan could continue.

In the Big Creek area, roads in the roaded portion of the area (defined as the area where roads have been reconstructed since the RARE II inventory) could be constructed or reconstructed. Roads in the unroaded portion of Big Creek (where no roads have been reconstructed since RARE II) could not be reconstructed, and no new permanent or temporary roads could be constructed. All existing Forest Service system roads in the Big Creek area could continue to be used and maintained, and all management activities currently allowed under the Forest Plan could continue.

There would be no change in the management of the Irish Wilderness Excluded Lands.

## **PROCEDURES**

The proposed rule would require that, during Forest Plan revision, local Forest managers look at the unroaded portions of inventoried roadless areas, as well as other unroaded areas, and (1) evaluate the quality and importance of their roadless characteristics; and (2) determine whether and how to protect those characteristics in the context of multiple-use management.

**CURRENT CONDITION OF OTHER UNROADED AREAS ON MTNF:** During the RARE II process, many different areas were evaluated for inclusion in the roadless inventory. Although many of them did not meet the criteria for inventoried roadless areas, it was recognized that some of them did have roadless or other characteristics that should be protected. Some of those areas were given special designations, such as Mud Creek, which has State Natural Area designation. As mentioned previously, several of these areas were listed as "sensitive areas" and are managed according to the 6.1 management prescription.

**EFFECT OF PROPOSAL ON MTNF:** There is no inventory of other unroaded areas. The procedures do not directly implement or prohibit any activities. Therefore, the effects of this part of the proposal on the Mark Twain are not known, and cannot be known until we enter into the Forest Plan revision process. During the Forest Plan revision, the Forest would, with public involvement, identify and evaluate other unroaded areas, such as was done with the "seven sensitive areas" during the initial plan development. The proposal would establish a higher level of awareness about roadless characteristics, and could provide more protection for those characteristics.

## **TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST**

The proposed rule would postpone a review of roadless areas on Tongass National Forest until April 2004.

**EFFECT OF PROPOSAL ON MTNF:** This part of the proposed rule would have no effect on Mark Twain National Forest.